

Annual State Goals and Reports of Progress

Results of Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the Rehabilitation Needs of Individuals with Disabilities and Need to Establish, Develop, or Improve Community Rehabilitation Programs

State Unified Plan

South Dakota Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI), the Designated State Unit for vocational rehabilitation for individuals who are blind or visually impaired in South Dakota, is submitting attachment 4.12(a) with the state plan update to address activities related to the comprehensive statewide needs assessment. As a partner in the State Unified Plan, public vocational rehabilitation has conducted an assessment of the needs of all individuals with disabilities as per the Needs Assessment section of the State Unified Plan and the requirements of the Rehabilitation Act and state plan requirements. Public vocational rehabilitation (the Division of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired) included other workforce partners on a work group to develop methodologies to assure that the workforce needs of the state, to include individuals with disabilities were addressed. This assessment includes the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, individuals with disabilities who have been unserved and underserved and all components of the Statewide Workforce Investment System.

In addition public vocational rehabilitation conducts annual needs assessments and focus groups for the need to establish, develop, and improve community rehabilitation programs in the state. This on-going assessment process includes the workforce investment system, public providers and private providers to address the needs of all citizens served by the South Dakota Career Center system including the needs of individuals with disabilities served by the system.

Public vocational rehabilitation also collects, reviews, and recommends improvements to needs assessments performed by other partners in both the workforce investment system and public agencies who work with and provide programming to individuals with disabilities. This oversight and review is intended to coordinate services and systems statewide for individuals with disabilities.

Activities Conducted for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

The Comprehensive Statewide Assessment identifies the rehabilitation and career needs of individuals with disabilities and is accomplished through a variety of activities. The process is contingent upon input from the Board of SBVI and input from other organizations involved in the provision of services. Information from entities who conduct assessments to address a variety of factors that impact services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired are one component of the needs assessment process. Ongoing comprehensive assessments are conducted through surveys, focus groups and public meetings, case file reviews and other activities initiated by the Division in conjunction with a variety of entities.

The Comprehensive Statewide Assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities and the need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs is derived from a variety of sources. These sources summarize identified needs of individuals with disabilities in the state plan. With this information, the Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired are working on developing updated goals and strategies for the State Plan attachments 4.12(c)(1) and 4.12(d). The sources of this information consist of:

- Comprehensive statewide needs survey during FFY 2004
- Consumer satisfaction surveys done annually;
- Survey of Community Rehabilitation Programs;
- Annual public meetings;

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- Focus groups meetings with consumers and providers;
 - Annual case file reviews;
 - Conferences and seminars;
 - Input from consumer organizations for the blind;
 - Board and SILC strategic planning sessions;
 - Medicaid Infrastructure Grant and Council;
 - Training needs assessments for agency staff, Community Rehabilitation Programs, the state's 121 projects and other entities involved in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services;
 - Involvement and participation on boards such as: Statewide Independent Living Council; Work Force Development Council; Career Planning Council; Assistive Technology Advisory Council; and SD School for the Blind Advisory Council.

The public vocational rehabilitation programs also collect, review, and recommend improvements to needs assessments performed by other partners in both the workforce investment system and public agencies who work with and provide services to individuals with disabilities. This oversight and review is intended to coordinate services and systems statewide for individuals with disabilities.

The Division has emphasized programming to ensure students with disabilities experience a seamless system between the Individual Education Plan (IEP) and Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). The Division's policy is to include relevant components of the IEP in the IPE. In addition, the Division has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Office of Special Education and the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to promote referrals of students with disabilities at an earlier age. The SD Transition Project and SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired have played an integral role in promoting collaboration between education and vocational rehabilitation to prepare students for the world of work.

The Board of SBVI provides valuable guidance and direction in assessing the comprehensive needs that need to be addressed. In addition, the Board provides input into establishing state goals and priorities and reports of progress. Attachment 4.12(c) (1) reflects goals established by the Board that directly correlate to the needs and priorities addressed in this attachment to the State Plan.

Needs of Individuals with Disabilities Who Have the Most Significant Disabilities, Including Their Need for Supported Employment Services

“Individual with a Most Significant Disability” means an individual with a disability who meets the criteria for having a significant disability and *in addition* has serious limitations in two or more functional capacities (such as, but not limited to, mobility, communication, self-care, self-direction, interpersonal skills, work tolerance, or work skills) in terms of an employment outcome. Individuals who meet the criteria for Priority Level I category are determined to be individuals with the “Most Significant Disability”.

Findings of the comprehensive needs assessment for individuals with the most significant disabilities consist of: Need for coordinated services between systems and agencies; Need for specialized services; Opportunities for more community based assessments and work experiences; Services to be more community based; Increased availability of providers; and Continued training for service providers.

The Division has and continues to make great strides in addressing the needs of the findings of the comprehensive assessment for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Goals #3, #8, and #11 in attachment 4.12(c)(1) and their corresponding strategies in attachment 4.12(d) are specifically addressing this target group. Our accomplishments are summarized in attachment 4.12(e) with some of the most significant accomplishments listed below:

- Specialized services for individuals who are blind or visually impaired through the SD Rehabilitation Center for the Blind.
- Specialized services for individual with dual sensory loss (vision and hearing) through service provision by a specially trained Deaf-Blind Specialist.
- Consumers with diabetic retinopathy resulting in significant vision loss have access to specialized services through the SBVI Diabetic Education Specialist.
- Spinal Cord/Traumatic Brain Injury Research Fund was established in 2004.
- Paid work experiences being provided for students with disabilities and individuals being served through community mental health centers.
- Converting state and provider positions from segregated training to community based system.
- Private provider system has increased availability of service options and choices.
- Providing insurance coverage and fee structure for situational assessments has more than tripled the use of situational assessments.
- Specialized services for individuals who are blind/visually impaired, mental health impairments, development disability, or have a traumatic brain injury.
- Training provided three times a year for providers.
- Policy developed on the coordination of services between the Division of Developmental Disabilities and the Division of Mental Health.
- The provision of on-going training and technical assistance through a jointly funded project between the public Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and Special Education.

Services to minorities who have been unserved or underserved: The largest minority group in South Dakota involves American Indians from several tribes, making up approximately 8% (8.3 according to 2000 U.S. Census data) of the state's total population. We have initiated a number of activities to address serving all eligible individuals, regardless of race or ethnicity. Following is a description of the policies and steps that SBVI is taking and will continue to take to ensure minorities (especially American Indians) with disabilities have equal access to VR services.

The results of the three-year comprehensive needs assessment included 5.6% of respondents identified as American Indian (an increase from 3.7% from the previous in the 1996 comprehensive needs assessment) indicated specific service needs of American Indians with disabilities. Issues that specifically impact individuals from minority backgrounds who are unserved or underserved include:

- Transportation – lack of public transit on American Indian Reservations requires that Vocational Rehabilitation provide for transportation to access services.
- Communications – Many American Indians do not have access to the internet or even telephones making communication difficult.
- Access to medical services – Indian Health Services are available on Reservations and Tribal lands but these facilities are often understaffed and do not have the latest in medical technology or medical specialists to provide treatment. Vocational Rehabilitation services include transportation and maintenance to urban areas for needed treatment as part of Individual Plans for Employment.

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- There are limited job opportunities on the states Reservations leading to challenges for job development and job placement.

SBVI has developed strategies for addressing results of the survey including training for VR counselors in providing options for self-employment for eligible American Indians and collaboration with the 121 projects and the Native American Independent Living Center in South Dakota. Other initiatives resulting from the needs assessment survey involved the provision of more culturally sensitive services for American Indians other minorities with disabilities.

Attachment 4.11(b) of the State plan:

- Describes SBVI's efforts to recruit individuals from minority backgrounds for counseling and other positions in the agency.
- Ensures that SBVI does not discriminate in employing individuals from minority backgrounds.
- Identifies resources for training for VR counselors regarding the provision of services for individuals of minority backgrounds.
- Describes cooperative agreements SBVI has entered into with four American Indian VR Programs and an American Indian Independent Living Program operating in the State.
- Describes initiatives to include the counselors and other staff from the 121 projects in state sponsored training.
- Describes how SBVI pays for interpreters for individuals seeking SBVI's services who are non-English speaking.

SBVI has taken the following additional steps to assure equal access to American Indians with disabilities and individuals with disabilities from other minority groups:

- SRC membership includes an American Indian representative of the 121 projects.
- SBVI's policy manual includes specific guidance on providing culturally sensitive services to American Indians with disabilities.
- SBVI has entered into cooperative agreements with the 121 projects operating in the State to ensure American Indians with disabilities receive the services they need in the most appropriate setting.
- SBVI staff have done outreach activities on American Indian reservations during promotion of National Disability Employment Awareness Month.
- SBVI moved a vocational rehabilitation counselor position to the central part of the state, in part to reduce the distance between VR staff and American Indians living on reservations.
- SBVI provides specialty services such as diabetic counseling for American Indians with diabetes related visual impairments.
- Employees and consumers of SBVI participate in the Native American Summit to learn strategies for addressing cultural issues when serving South Dakotans of American Indian heritage.
- The Consortia of Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) awarded the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired the "Eagle Partnership Award" in May of 2005, in appreciation of devoted service to the CANAR mission to improve the quality of life for American Indians with disabilities.

Activities to ensure participation of citizens who are blind and from minority backgrounds will continue to be a priority for the Division and Board of SBVI. In addition to those of American Indian dissent, we are also experiencing an increased demand for services from individuals of minority

backgrounds from a variety of diverse cultures. We will continue to monitor performance data and agency policies and procedures and the impact on service delivery for SD citizens from minority backgrounds who are blind and visually impaired.

Summary of Statewide Needs Assessment - Completed FFY 2004

The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (Division or SBVI) in conjunction with the Board of SBVI, worked with other divisions and councils to complete a statewide needs assessment during FFY 2004. In order to efficiently utilize resources and provide for a broad based assessment, SBVI did collaborate with other entities in accomplishing the assessment. The survey results were shared with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired at the June 17, 2005 meeting. Addressing strategies to address findings are an ongoing Board activity.

The 2004 Statewide Needs Assessment presents the results of the third South Dakota Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired survey on the triumphs and challenges of persons with disabilities in South Dakota. A large sample (738) of South Dakota residents with disabilities sixteen (16) years of age and older were interviewed. More than thirty-nine thousand (39,360) telephone calls were placed to twenty thousand random digit telephone numbers. Of the twenty thousand (20,000) random digits, thirteen thousand four hundred and seventy-four (13,474) were non-working or nonresidential telephone numbers. Six thousand five hundred and twenty-six (6,526) telephone numbers were not eliminated and were assumed to be valid residential numbers. A total of four thousand four hundred and eighty (4,480) telephone interviews were completed. That extraordinary effort was necessary to identify the households with persons with disabilities and to complete a sufficient number of surveys in order to satisfy the sampling design. Inquiry was made about each person's participation in their community including their experiences with employment, their sources of income, transportation, housing, health care, social interaction, assistive technology services and education. The intent of the study is to provide information that will allow us to better understand challenges faced by South Dakotans with disabilities.

Respondents with visual impairment

- A visual impairment or blindness was the third most commonly reported disability at 4.5%, behind physical disabilities (83.2%) and mental or emotional disabilities (6.8%). Those reporting visual disabilities decreased by 3.5% compared to the 2000 report.

Transportation

- Thirty-seven percent (36.7%) either agree or strongly agree that their disability creates a significant transportation problem for them.

Employment

- Twenty-three percent (23.4%) of the survey participants said that they are working full or part time. Two percent (2.0%) indicated they were unemployed looking for work and an additional three percent (2.8%) said they were unemployed and not looking for work.

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- Twenty-six percent (26.3%) said that they are completely unable to work. An additional eighteen percent (18.0%) of those surveyed thought their disability prevents them from finding and keeping a full time job.
 - All participants not currently working but who have worked outside the home at some time were asked why they left their last job? The most common response (41.3%) was retirement followed by the response of health or disability problems (40.1%). The result of an aging population is reflected in this response.
 - From the survey data, the unemployment rate for the people with disabilities unemployed and looking for work is estimated at two percent (2.0%). That rate is one and two tenths of a percentage point lower than the state's 11 month average unemployment rate from January through November (3.2%). Labor force and unemployment data is from the South Dakota Department of Labor.
 - Twelve percent (11.8%) of the unemployed respondents that have worked outside the home said their fear of losing benefits keeps them from accepting or seeking employment.
 - Five percent (4.6%) of the respondents employed full or part time thought they needed a personal attendant while at work in order to keep their job.
 - Twelve percent (11.8%) of the unemployed thought having a personal attendant would help them get a job.

Assistive Services

- Twenty-six percent (25.5%) said they need more information about their rights under the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Assessment of the need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs

The need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation is assessed by analyzing service provision and outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Community rehabilitation programs have access to training and technical assistance to enhance their programs and services for individuals served through community based services. To better assess these needs, the South Dakota community rehabilitation programs participated in a needs assessment completed in December, 2004. The key areas with the greatest needs identified from this survey and other sources (identified at the beginning of this document) consist of:

- Job development and employer relations;
- Employment for individuals with mental illness;
- Transition from school to work;
- Workplace analysis, job analysis, and task analysis;
- Social Security Work Incentives; and

- Career Planning

In addition, the South Dakota Rehabilitation Center for the Blind (SDRC) provides blindness skills training and vocational services including situational assessments, job development, job placement and job coaching and work adjustment evaluations and training. Staff at SDRC are trained in the specialty skills of blindness in addition to vocational skills training. Vocational staff are included in community rehabilitation program training employer education activities.

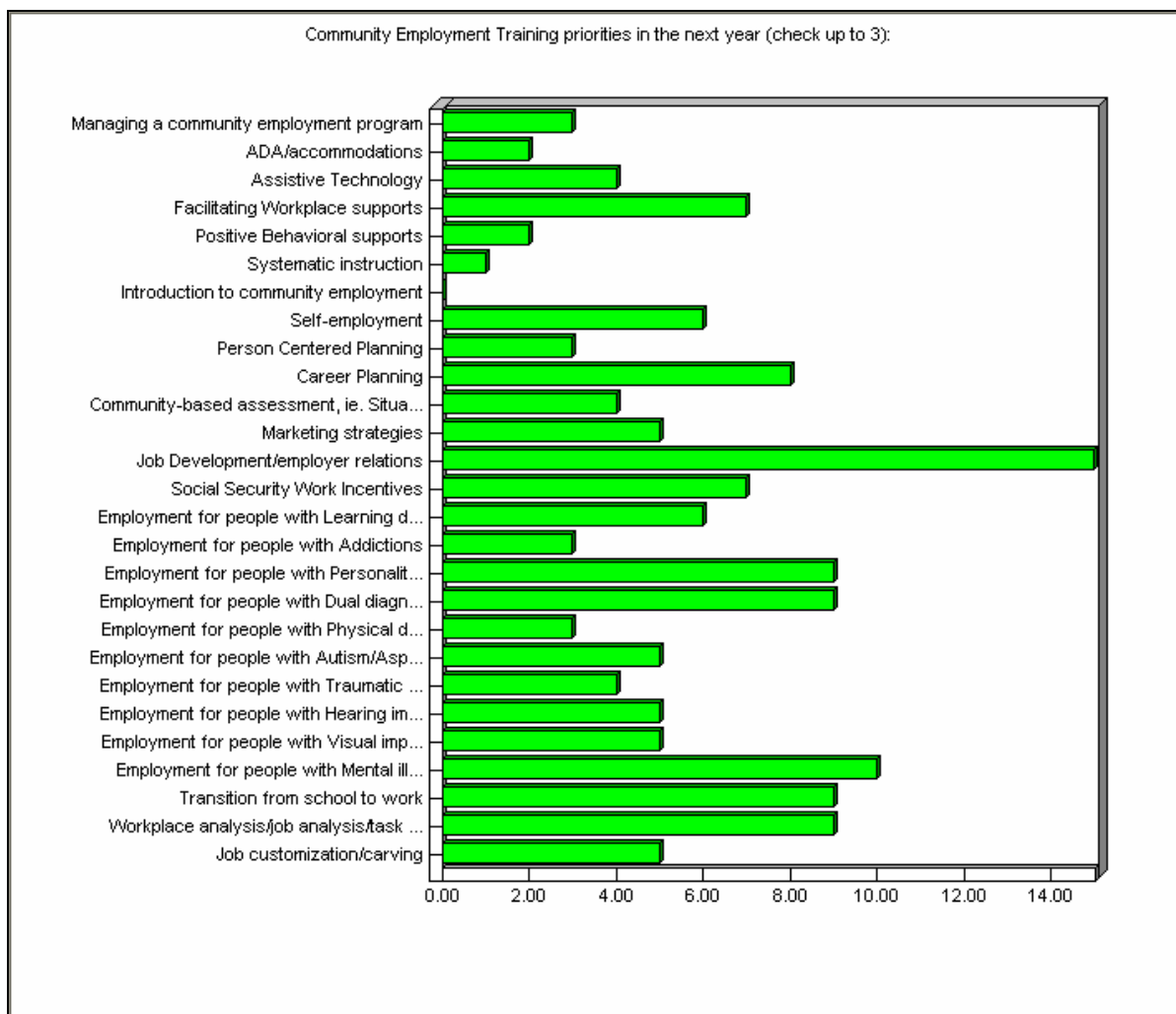
The Divisions for Rehabilitation Services (DRS) and SBVI in conjunction with the Region VIII CRP RCEP at CTAT host annual competency training for providers. This week long training has 25-35 providers in attendance and addresses all of the items identified in the needs assessment. In addition, the Division invites providers to attend the annual Mid-Winter conference and the annual Fall Conference. Topics for these conferences include topics that are identified through training needs assessments and other surveys provided to Community Rehabilitation Programs.

SBVI and DRS continually assesses the need to establish, develop and improve community rehabilitation programs via all of the methods described throughout attachment 4.12 (a). Among the need areas being addressed with significant additional development at this time include:

1. Expansion of services to rural and remote areas by the continued certification of private providers who meet qualification levels for job placement and job coaching services.
2. Expansion of Project Skills contracts that now cover every school district in the state and the SD School for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide paid employment to transition age students as part of their IEP and section 504 vocational rehabilitation plans.
3. Enhancement and improvement of the Transition Liaison Services project that provides expanded transition services to transition age students involved in Special education and vocational rehabilitation.
4. Expansion of assistive technology service delivery system to increase timeliness of access to assessments and assistive devices to all individuals on a statewide basis to enhance employment and earnings potential to all consumers served by the vocational rehabilitation program. Fee for service system established by SBVI and DRS in AT program development allows all programs that serve individuals with disabilities access to AT services. This includes all school district, independent living centers, Native American rehabilitation programs, and other disability service providers in the state.

The above four examples represent a snapshot of community rehabilitation program development and improvement of community rehabilitation programs in South Dakota. As indicated in the next section of this attachment, the continuing need to establish, develop, and improve community rehabilitation programs will be addressed in the development of goals and strategies in the upcoming state plan year.

A needs assessment completed in December, 2004 specifically addressed the needs of the community rehabilitation programs in South Dakota. The Center for Technical Assistance and Training is utilizing the results of this assessment to fund and assist with training for CRPs in South Dakota. Following is a summary of their results with their greatest needs as the highest number.



The Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired regularly reviews assessments that are done by other agencies and organizations that include individuals with disabilities. These, coupled with the results of the assessment methods described in this attachment provide valuable information that assists in determining goals and priorities in public rehabilitation in South Dakota. Activities are planned in cooperation with the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Region VIII Community Rehabilitation Program Rehabilitation Education Program and other entities in the Workforce Investment Act. SBVI provides specialty training related to employment for individuals with vision impairment and blindness to SDRC employees as well as to Community Rehabilitation Program staff.

Goals and Strategies

Findings from the statewide needs assessment and a number of other activities are utilized to identify goals and strategies to improve services. Goals and priorities are addressed in attachment 4.12(c)(1) through a number of activities planned with input elicited from the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, consumers of services and other partners in vocational rehabilitation. Strategies are addressed attachment 4.12(d). In addition to the statewide needs assessment, the following activities are instrumental in developing appropriate state goals and priorities and strategies for use of Title I funds in innovation and expansion activities:

- Consumer Satisfaction Surveys;
- Public Meetings;

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- Focus Groups;
 - Case file reviews;
 - Conferences and Seminars;
 - Board and SILC Strategic Planning Sessions.

The results reported for the state wide needs assessment for this year's state plan submission will be analyzed and strategies developed to address identified needs. Future state plan updates will address results from activities that provide information pertinent to goals and priorities and strategies to address innovation and expansion activities. Collaboration between the State Workforce Investment Council, Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, Statewide Independent Living Council and other entities in the workforce, education and social service systems will occur to ensure continuity of policies and procedures for service provision.